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Europe's housing crisis continues unabated

For the second year running, FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre have found that if you're poor, young or from southern or eastern Europe, your housing conditions are likely to be much worse than your older, western counterparts.

Following on from the first ever [European Housing Exclusion Index](#) last year, [FEANTSA](#) and [Fondation Abbé Pierre](#) have released the **2016 Index**, which uses newly-released Eurostat (EU-SILC) data on living and housing conditions from the year **2014** – this being the only European-wide data which allows for the assessment of EU countries' capacity to adequately house their populations.

11.5% of the total European population experiences housing cost overburden¹ and this rate rises to **40%** for poor European households. **5%** of the total EU population faces severe housing deprivation². **Fifteen** European countries saw a rise in the proportion of the population unable to keep their home adequately warm between 2007 and 2014 (+4,9 % for UK, +7,3 % for Italy, +19,1 % for Greece).³ For a substantial part of Europe, quality and adequacy of housing is still a major challenge.

Young people are disproportionately affected by housing exclusion in most countries: this is often linked to cuts in their rights to social benefits, which are becoming increasingly limited in a number of countries. Excluding young people from housing now risks creating a "locked out" generation. In Europe, people between 20 and 29 years old are **1.5** times more likely to face severe housing deprivation compared to the general population, and this rises to **three** times in the Netherlands.

Yet again, Greece has come bottom of the table, having experienced an apocalyptic situation with **95%** of people living in poverty (below 60% of median income) in housing cost overburden. This indicates a situation where almost all poor households in Greece see their stability and well-being put at risk by housing expenses. There, as for other countries that have undergone Troika-imposed austerity, housing costs and conditions continue to worsen, and people's rights to housing continue to be violated.

The United Kingdom has fallen sharply in the rankings (20th, a fall of eight places), principally as a consequence of budget cuts to housing benefit. It is important to keep in mind, however, that these figures are heavily influenced by the situation in England, while in Scotland a different housing policy, excluding the bedroom tax, has been being implemented.

The state of affairs in Hungary and Bulgaria continues to worsen while other EU countries facing difficulty make progress, notably the Czech Republic (16th) and Poland (19th). Differences between Eastern and Western European countries are

¹ Housing cost overburden corresponds to the population living in households where the total housing costs ("net" of housing allowances) represent more than 40% of disposable income ("net" of housing allowances").

² Severe housing deprivation refers to people living in an overcrowded dwelling deprived by at least one housing deprivation item. The housing deprivation items considered are: leaking roof, damp walls/floors/foundation, or rot in window frames or floor; no bath or shower in the dwelling and no indoor flushing toilet for the sole use of the household; dwelling too dark; overcrowding.

³ Inability to keep home adequately warm is about affordability (ability to pay) to keep the home adequately warm, regardless of whether the household actually needs to keep it adequately warm.



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principally explained by the fact that overcrowding is still a big challenge in Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, where more than 40% of the total population live in overcrowded dwellings.⁴

Luxembourg has once again come top of the league table, but its performance is partly accounted for by the “externalisation” of poorer households on the other side of the borders with Belgium and France, so there are difficulties in accurately measuring the situation there. In addition to this, Luxembourg, along with Malta, is a small country, so comparing them with other EU countries is very difficult. Nordic countries do well in the rankings, due to traditional welfare state policies and to beneficial cultural and juridical norms. Finland (3rd) not only has policies that perform well, but over the past ten years it has engaged in a permanent improvement strategy to assess the efficiency of these policies (programmes Paavo I and Paavo II). Ireland (2nd) has achieved a spectacular leap in the rankings, as a result of its rapid economic rebound after a fall in property prices and a wave of downward revision of the number of bank loans; unfortunately, the European data do not reflect the alarming situation of numerous Irish people experiencing extreme housing exclusion and homelessness.

This highlights two main issues that should be priorities for Member States and for the EU in light of its commitments to tackling poverty and social exclusion: Europeans, especially those who are poor, should be able to find adequate and affordable housing, and solutions for matching housing stock and housing demand have to be promoted. A wide range of innovative affordable housing options can be suggested in this regard, such as the reuse of empty homes in Europe.⁵

This index will be a component of the next “Overview of Housing Exclusion” report, which will be released in March 2017 by FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre.

⁴ The overcrowding rate is based on the calculation of the number of rooms for each household. The dwelling have to include one room for the household, one room for each couple in the household, one room for each single person aged 18 and over, one room for two single people of the same sex between 12 and 17 years of age, one room for each single person of different sex between 12 and 17 years of age, one room for two people under 12 years of age.

⁵ See FEANTSA and Fondation Abbé Pierre’s 2016 publication: ["Filling Vacancies - Vacant Real Estate: Seizing the Opportunity to Find Affordable Housing Solutions in the EU."](#)